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ABSTRACT

The 1966 Master Plan of the State University of New York decreed the establishment of the State University College of Old Westbury. This new college was to be known as the "experimental" college of S.U.N.Y. The goals expressed by this new college are exciting, inspiring, and due to the system which promulgated them, inherently unrealizable. Due to the needs of the "parent" systems, the "child" could not survive in any form very different from any other state college. The first academic year ended in a sit-in during which most of the students, faculty, and administration found themselves involved in a bitter fight around every issue but the central one--the built-in contradictions inherent in a state supported "experimental" college. The steadily escalating tension arose as a result of the conflict between Old Westbury's college heredity and Old Westbury's college environment (which was both "inherited" and created), plus the environment that is out of its control entirely, the American political scene. (Author/KE)

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STUDY OF AN "EXPERIMENT":

OLD WESTBURY COLLEGE

An Analysis of the Failure of a State Supported Experimental College

HE 006 535

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INTRODUCTION

The 1966 Master Plan of the State University of New York decreed the establishment of the State University College at Old Westbury. This new college was to be known as the "experimental" college of S.U.N.Y. The roots of this description lie in the mandate, which was reprinted (in part) in the first college catalgue, and widely distributed. It contained words like "innovate," "create from the groun up," and "partnership." The goals expressed in the mandate are exciting, inspiring, and, due to the system which promulgated them, inherently unrealizable. Due to this, the first academic year ended in a sit-in, during which most of the students, faculty, and administration found themselves involved in a bitter and acrimonious fight around every issue but the central one--the built-in contradictions inherent in a state supported "experimental" college:

This paper is an attempt to analyse the process which is Old Westbury College. I hope to show how, due to the needs of the "parent" systems, the "child" could not survive in any form very different from any other state college. I submit that, in its birth (including Albany), Old Westbury could never

have come close to fulfilling its mandate.

The story of Old Westbury is really the description of a struggle between it heredity and environment.

Webster defines heredity as "that which relates to inheritance (from a Latin root hered), including the transmission from parent to offspring of certain characteristics; a tendency of offspring to resemble parents or ancestors." This concept of the transmission of resemblance is a very important one in so far as this paper is concerned.

To quote Mr. Webster again, envrionment is, "all the conditions, circumstances, and influences surrounding and affecting the development of an organism or a group of organisms." This definition, which is also crucial to this analysis, could cover some series of things also considered heredity. For example: a child born with congenital harelip (a hereditary family trait) might find that this affliction also was a "...condition, circumstance, or influence...affecting (his) development", (from the definition of environment). In other words, it is quite possible to "inherit" environment.

It is also possible to create environment--to manipulate the way the surroundings relate to you. From mini skirts to false eyelashes, the creation of "image"--our projective communications--affect our received communications. In this conceptual framework, students applying for admission as the result of our public image, can be seen as self-manipulated

impulses. We project--(miniskirts?) and we receive (old men need not apply). If our manipulated environment generates responses which we cannot deal with, not unlike the leggy lass fending off passes, unhappiness results.

These are the three conceptualizations this paper deals with:

(a) Old Westbury's College heredity

(b) Old Westbury's College environment, "inherited" and created, plus that which is out of its control entirely, such as the American political scene.

(c) The steadily escalating tension arising as the result of the conflict between (a) and (b)

Throughout the planning, faculty hiring, student recruiting, and the first academic year, these three components interacted, ending in the official closing of the school. The closing was not the result of any conspiratorial endeavor on the part of Albany or the President or the admissions staff. The closing resulted from good people doing their jobs and trying to the best of their ability to work for the betterment of education. Through different perceptions of what constitutes "better", students are alternately exhorted to be free thinkers, then warned to remember their place. They are urged to think "uniquely", then told that they can be treated only the same as other students in the system. The flaw in Old Westbury is really the expression of the unresolved educational conflict throughout the country, in microcosm. The closing was the expression of the irreconcilability of the various forms of "better" education.

THE INHERITANCE OF OLD WESTBURY

HEREDITY

Old Westbury's inheritance was far broader and more restrictive than many observers realize.

Inheritance #1 - The mandate (as reprinted in the catalogue):

MANDATE FOR A NEW COLLEGE

The State University will establish in Nassau County a college that pays heed to the individual student and his concern with the modern world... Specifically, this college will:

1. End the lock-step march in which one semester follows on another until four of youth's most energetic years have been consumed; to this purpose qualified students will be admitted to college without high school graduation, and those who attain competency will be granted degrees without regard to length of collegiate study.

2. Admit students to full partnership in the academic world and grant them the right to determine, in large measure, their own areas of study and research.

3. Use mechanical devices to free faculty scholars from the academic drudgery of repeated lectures, conducting classes devoted to drill, and marking many examinations, thus allowing faculty scholars to turn their full creative powers to meaningful exchange with students, to research, and to artistry.

Since the campus is to be built literally from the ground up, the President and the faculty members the President recruits will have an almost unrestricted opportunity for innovation and creativity.

Inheritance #2 - Ratios used in dispersing funds.

Old Westbury College is part of the State University of New York. The determination of how much money the State University of New York will give Old Westbury to fulfill its mandate of "unrestrictive opportunity for innovation and creation" is based on a complex system of ratios, designed to disburse various kinds of funds granted by the legislature equally and fairly among the separate campuses of the system. This system of disbursement assures that every college gets approximately the same amount of funds per student. The areas effected by the existence of this system include, but are not limited to, faculty salaries, administration salaries, dormitory construction (cost per square foot), library budget, classroom footage per student, financial aid, student services, student/faculty ratios, and recreation.

All the areas of planning the new college, then, were limited to the same fiscal restriction on creativity which are found on other campuses. If we assume good faith and sincerity of purpose on the part of other educational planners within the system, we see that the only real fiscal freedom we have to innovate or experiment is that freedom inherent in any new construction or employee selection: the freedom to try and do better with no special resources.

Albany did grant the college some special considerations in their dispersing of funds. For example, we were allowed an extraordinary student/faculty ratio during the first two years. This was justified to Albany because the faculty were functioning as "planners" in addition to being teachers. Lest this bit of largess

be thought of as an example of freedom we were granted because we were experimental, consider that Purchase College, founded at approximately the same time, was granted roughly the same faculty slots. Purchase College did not have students during its first year and thus did not have any student/faculty ration.

The reason student/faculty ratios remain the same (approximately) throughout the state system is to try and insure that no campus or group of students receives favoritism. The Albany effort at maintaining equity between campuses works against any experiment requiring different faculty/student ratios. This is an example of how good people in Albany, trying to protect the rights of the majority, may hamper any attempt to be experimental.

Inheritance #3 - Laws of the State.

Beyond the fiscal regimentation that Old Westbury exists under, we are bound to follow every relevant law found in four volumes of The Educational Law of the State of New York. This covers such areas as security, dorm design, record keeping, the role of counselors vis a vis drugs, and the use of state property.

Inheritance #4 - Policy of the Board of Trustees.

In addition to those codified restraints found in The Educational Law of the State of New York, the Board of Trustees has promulgated a thirty-four page booklet covering an incredible range of subjects. Not only do the trustees set policy on such matters as sick leave and promotion, they also direct the College to have a pyramidal authority structure, define the duties and

responsibility of the various offices they call for, and fully describe the composition and voting rights of the faculty. Further, that faculty is enjoined to establish itself into committees. The role of the President (called the Chief Administrative Officer) is described, and the manner in which he is to be advised, and by whom, is outlined.

It is well known that various kinds of administrative structures tend to predicate different kinds of results. A whole branch of the management consultant field specializing in organizational behavior has gained credibility and influence based on this fact. Many major industries are currently restructuring themselves in an effort to make themselves more efficient by designing their administrative superstructure to be more compatible to their stated goals.

It would seem obvious that any serious attempt at fulfilling the mandate might require innovation in the design of the bureaucracy. It is possible that after much study and considered judgment, those responsible for planning Old Westbury might have opted for the traditional pyramidal power structure. It is equally possible that other arrangements could have been devised. In fact, serious discussion and study was given to other bureaucratic forms. We considered, for example, a variation on the constituent college notion. In this arrangement the college would consist of a series of autonomous, federated, educational entities, each with its own unique educational perspective, with each designing its administrative superstructure to achieve its stated goals. The administering format would be subject to change by those people

studying in that constituent college. We considered a constituent college of politics, where various forms of governance and administration would be tried as part of the educational venture. Proposals for a return to the cathedral school model of France, where students hired and fired their faculty according to their educational need, were advanced. The rejection of administrators in toto was proposed; students would be required to administer their own school, set their own priorities, and fight for their educational ideals. The ideas were heady, laden with "opportunity for innovation and creativity".

The cruel fact is that none of this was ever possible due to the Board of Trustees' policy.

It should, in all fairness, be pointed out that other forms of college organization could exist in addition to those called for by the Trustees. However, since the Trustees clearly dictate that the college shall be administratively run in a pyramid fashion, any other organization which students or faculty might devise would in the purest sense be utilized at the pleasure of the holders of the Trustee defined positions. For example, if the planners decided that the faculty were accountable to a committee of the student body, instead of to the Deans, as called for by the Trustees, such an arrangement could work only with the consent of the individual faculty members and Deans. In effect, the Dean, who was vested with the responsibility for supervision of the faculty, would be surrendering voluntarily his authority, but not his responsibility. If there was trouble regarding the academic conduct of any faculty, the Trustees would naturally hold the Dean

responsible--not the student body. Therefore, any such innovation could be done only at the risk of being rendered inoperative at a crisis point--or any other point at which one of the participants no longer wanted to play the game.

Inheritance #5 - The Council of the College.

Each of the SUNY campuses has a Council established by the Governor.

The College Council is a group of relatively prominent local citizens, drawn from the geographic area surrounding the college campus. They have two legal responsibilities: recommending a new President for the college, and establishing the social rules and regulations of the college. In their two areas of responsibility we find different kinds of restraints on freedom and experimentation. In the first, selection of a President, questions larger than the actual identity of such a man loom. By having, and using, as they are obliged, the powers to select a President, many options are closed off. What other forms of organization development are potentially valuable? Could an experimental college exist without a president? Could it be run by a committee? Could students run it? Faculty? Professional administrators like a city manager? A number of equally empowered Deans? The law denies the chance to find out.

The second area of the Council's responsibility is that of establishing rules of social behavior. The fact that the Council has the responsibility to establish such rules might appear unimportant. However, we find that this limits freedom in two

important ways, one obvious, the other more subtle:

(a) Obviously, the rules for social behavior must necessarily reflect the mores of the society at large, which the Council represents. For example, polygamy could not be allowed.

(b) More subtle in its effect is the inhibition of innovation caused by the students' perception of what the Council would find acceptable.

The full implications of this part of our inheritance are discussed under the section devoted to environment.

Inheritance #6 - The Draft.

In considering possible changes in curricula, college planners hoping to "end the lock-step march in which one semester follows upon another until four of the students' most energetic years have been consumed" were continually confronted with the draft.

Current Selective Service policy states that a student may be granted a student deferment if he is registered in an approved institution of higher learning, making normal progress toward a degree. "Such progress shall mean that ¼ of the total requirements for graduation shall be taken each year the student is registered in a four year school, or 1/5 if said student is enrolled in a program taking five years." If a student intends to take more than four years to complete his degree, he must petition his draft board for permission.

The impact of this policy on our planning was substantial. The policy meant, for example, that no draftable male could consider taking two years off after his sophomore year to go abroad in any volunteer program except those draft-exempt programs, such as the Peace Corps was at the time.

Any discussion about a six year B.A. including substantial periods of travel was influenced by the often unspoken but heavy realization that such a program could possibly embroil the college in controversy with the Selective Service, and that, if it did not effect the college directly, a substantial possibility of embroiling some hapless student in draft difficulties existed. I cannot recall any definitive curricular plan which was discarded due to the existence of the draft. I do recall instances where exciting students decided not to apply, or decided not to try a curricular innovation, because of the chances of draft difficulty.

Citing the impact of this bit of heredity is ambiguous--but to deny that impact would be ignoring a major factor in college planners' thinking.

Inheritance #7 - The New York State Dormitory Authority.

The State of New York has an established bureaucracy entrusted with the responsibility of supervising dormitory construction. This organization insures that funding is available for dorm construction, and that the dorms meet standards established statewide. These standards include, (but are not limited to):

(a) A cost per square foot ratio allowance in new construction.

(b) A cost per bed ratio.

(c) A limit on the number of toilets per student, and maximum and minimum number of toilets permissible in a bathroom, and a limit on the number of bathrooms per hall.

(This last restriction means that, if you are going to have short halls, as the American Association of Architects recommends to avoid the chicken-coop effect, you can have only one bathroom.

This, in turn, means that you are architecturally locked into single sex dorm wings, which may or may not be a desire of the school. Such a restraint, for example, precludes having a wing of married students. It precludes co-ed dorms, or even extended co-ed floor usage during the day, since the toilet facilities are located on another floor.)

(d) A restriction on the amount of footage that a dormitory can have which is not actually dormitory. If you wanted to interperse classrooms and dorm suites, it would not be allowed beyond a certain minimal limit. The same restrictions apply to lounge space, computer terminals, garage or hobby shops for students. This leads to the dispersing of recreation, eating, study, and sleep into different buildings.

This catagorization of the various activities of a normal day into different architectural units works against any student developing for himself an environment which satisfies even a basic majority of his needs. It tends to foster the seperation of life's events into unreal blocks. The stereotypical American who has his "play time", "love making time", and "work time" is not challenged in any way by this arrangement. If anything, the environment thus created fosters the growth of anomie in the subject students.

(e) A short-sighted view of what permissible building materials are.

For example: research has shown that floors covered with rugs require less maintenance than tile floors, in the long run. They are quieter, more conducive to study, and tend to eliminate

such behavior as shaving cream fights, and other "normal" college activity. Yet, due to the fact that the cost per foot is initially higher, this kind of construction is practically not allowed. The same thing applies to such materials as cement block construction, which causes a lot of noise transmission from room to room, and makes such things as picture hanging impossible. It is, however, initially cheaper.

(f) The Dormitory Authority is another source of "what will the public think if we try this?" negativism. For example, at one point we wanted to include a small brick fireplace in a dormitory lounge. It was within the cost per square foot allowance, and the building code, and the zoning regulations, but it was not allowed because the Dormitory Authority felt the public would see it as too opulent.

(g) The Dormitory Authority also is responsible, by existence, for insuring that a new college gets into the housing business at all. They are responsible for a law which states that no state-owned land can be leased to a private corporation. This precludes a new school from entrusting a corporation with furnishing suitable low cost housing for students, thus removing itself from the problems of dorm supervisors, proctors, room checks, furniture damage, key deposits, maintenance, etc. To be able to simply say to students that the college was not in the housing business, but that suitable quarters were guaranteed available across the street at the hotel/apartments would be an incredible relief to both the student and the school. It is a freedom not allowed in a location like Old Westbury, by geography,

nor in most schools for the same reason. Since the only source near new colleges of large enough land plots for such housing facilities is often the State, the Dormitory Authority precludes this option. To defend this in terms of a financial saving to the student is absurd, because the cost per square foot per month of a dorm room is higher than the cost per square foot of a midtown Manhattan apartment.

Inheritance #8 - Required Courses.

The Board of Trustees' policy, despite the mandated call for individualized study, demands at least one general requirement of all students. Physical education is at most other colleges the epitome of the inane trivialities dispensed as college education. Old Westbury is not permitted to be substantially different. We are required to have our students complete four semesters of physical education.

This requirement of a gym course offends many students. A considerable investment in physical installations perhaps otherwise unwarranted is required. This is also contrary to the words in the Mandate, and certainly to the spirit of the Mandate.

Inheritance #9 - The Civil Service System.

Aside from highest rank administrators, the faculty, and the professional staff, all other people connected with the college were controlled by Civil Service. This had many implications for the school.

In keeping with the philosophy of many of the students and

faculty, an aggressive hiring policy was advocated. The intent was to provide as many high level positions as possible for minority group members. This was thwarted, because the appointment of people to such positions had to be done through the Civil Service lists, and race could not be a factor in such appointments. In addition, some members of the support staff, notably secretaries, proved extremely skillful and capable of working under the relatively confusing environment that was the embryonic Old Westbury. Merit wage increases or promotions were impossible to give these people.

Once we had decided to be aggressive in recruiting minority group members, we were confronted with the fact that, in most cases, the jobs were dead-end jobs. We had not provided new growth opportunities for oppressed people--we had simply moved the site of the oppression from one institution to another.

We reasoned that one of the ways we could provide growth and mobility opportunities for our Civil Service employees would be to grant full access to educational opportunity of the school. Such employees would be welcomed, no, encouraged, to gain a college education while working, in order to provide themselves with skills to move up the ladder.

This was stopped cold by a policy of Albany's (I couldn't locate the exact source) which says that no person could be eligible for tuition reduction and release time unless the courses he was taking were job related. This means that no janitor can take history, no secretary can take a science, or a language. While the inherited restraint did not actually relate to the Civil Service system, it was a policy of the States educational bureaucracy which frustrated our reformers intent.

From: A CONCEPT OF LONG RANGE PLANNING

By L. J. Livesey, Vice Chancellor, Long Range Planning

SERVICE TO PARTICIPATION

If the Chancellor and Presidents of campuses are the Chief Planning Officers of State University, then it is the conviction of the office of Long Range Planning that the planners of the University are the faculty and students. Without their participation, no plans for the future are likely to be meaningful or effective.

One problem with participation in the State University is to get a clear understanding of the roles involved. The faculty and students are the chief contributors of new ideas and fresh proposals. The campus President, in consultation with the Chancellor, exercises leadership in his selections for the campus plan.

Another problem with participation is the tendency to confuse planning with decision-making. The function of master planning is to look as far as possible into the future and to give the benefit of doubt to new ideas about new obligations of the University. In the next succeeding master plans, it should be possible to amend a proposal, to withdraw it, or to substitute a better one. In this way, master planning serves decision-making long before irretrievable determinations must be made.

These things suggest that informality should be the key to maximum participation in the planning process.

From the appointment of Harris Wofford to the Presidency of Old Westbury until just before the first students began classes, the College of Old Westbury went thrcugh a fetal stage. This state consisted of the extended examination of colleges and college education by the planning staff composed of an amazing variety of people. Among the planners were high priced consultants of considerable stature, college drop-outs thoroughly "co-opted" establishment types, and a wide variety of more obvious sources of educational perspective, such as professors, Deans of Students, etc.

The major influences present during this period were:

(a) the President

(b) the Faculty and traditional academicians from outside, who shared a perspective on education learned during their "guild" apprenticeship.

(c) the student planners, and a collection of roving young educational enrages, most of whom felt that it was up to them to "save" Old Westbury from becomimg like "all the others."

(d) the student personnel staff, including the Dean of students, Director of Admissions, and various counselors and "people oriented people" who happened to drift through.

(e) the line administration staff, responsible for such things as architecture, business affairs, library developments, and so forth.

This categorization is by no means definitive, nor meant to be insulting to those who may have participated in the planning process. Many of the people in one group shared characteristics with another. However, their jobs and concomitant restraints and perspectives are different enough to make this division useful.

STUDENT PLANNERS

One of the earliest decisions made by President Wofford and his embryonic planning staff was the one to invite students to participate in the planning of the school. The student planners were, almost invariably, bright, white, middle class college students who were dissatisfied with current American higher education. As such, they brought two important perspectives with them. They were first, liberals. They thought that educational institutions could be reformed from within. A few were of the stated opinion that no State University could ever be experimental. Either they did not believe themselves, because they stayed around and worked hard to make it experimental, or they left, consistent with their stated beliefs. In any case, I believe that those who remained were "liberal" in the sense that they believed an institution could be changed from within.

Second, and perhaps due to the segment of the student population they came from, most of the student planners were reacting to what they perceived as bad: grades, curfews, requirements, etc. Therefore, their recommendations for change were a reaction to already existing institutions. They defined what they did NOT want: no grades, no curfews, no this and no that. It was

relatively rare that a student planner (or first year student) cried for an innovation in the positive sense.

The fact is that planning is essentially a positive process of creation. Using this group of student planners with it's essentially reactive viewpoint, an important bias was created which allowed higher education in America to pass substantially unchallenged. Once those objectionable elements of college were removed, the remainder was allowed pass unaltered in any substantial way. A fair analogy might be the different results auto makers get when they de-bug and update an old model rather than design a new one from the wheels up. One retains the shape and basic parts of its predecessor, while the other dictates all new tooling to manufacture totally new ingredients.

STUDENT PERSONNEL STAFF

The student personnel staff was a very important element in the planning process. It included the Dean of Students, the Director of Admissions, the future Director of Financial Aid, and some other people oriented towards the satisfying of the "non-academic" needs of students. This orientation toward satisfying the NON ACADEMIC NEEDS of students is the significant distinguishing characteristic separating the SP staff from other staff units.

Many of the other staff were equally concerned, as individuals, with satisfying the non-academic needs of students. The Dean of Administration comes to mind as the prime example. Yet, in many ways the grouping remains valid in analyzing the function

of the group in planning. Most of the local public contacts of the school prior to admission were made by this group. A large share of the media coverage originated with this group. The raising of expectation levels among potential students to unrealistic levels insofar as expecting a humane environment to live and study in has its well-intentioned roots here. By functioning with concern, consideration for individuality, and a tolerance for creativity, this group created the impression that the school would function this way.

It is important to understand that student personnel services were simply taking the Albany rhetoric and believing it. One might say that their chief concern was being trusting and honest--and expecting others to be the same.

THE FACULTY

During the planning stage, traditional academic interests were represented by the faculty. This consisted of one full-time philosopher, and several part-time educational consultants. Later in the planning stage other faculty joined, as they were selected by the planning staff. It is important to realize that these additions reflected the accumulation of high expectation levels, for these people were faculty hired by people who were not yet aware of the hidden constraints on the fetus' development. These other additions came, then, because they liked what they had heard and read. They then began to compound the high expectation levels by selecting other faculty like themselves.

This is significant when one considers the admissions process, where faculty transmitted their high expectation levels to incoming students.

As planners, the faculty was perhaps more traditional than the other groups. Calls for "reference posts" (grades of one sort or another), "rigor" and mandatory attendance tended to come from this group. This is not to say that they were not innovative or creative--they were. On a continuum composed of all planners, however, they were more likely to appear conservative.

THE LINE STAFF

This group was composed of various professional administrators who were responsible for specific segments of the college. The Librarian, Architect, Business Officer, Facilities Director, Personnel Officer, and their assistants, fall into this category. As planners, this group tended to center more on the "how-to-do" rather than the "what to do" questions. This often placed them in the position of revealing the first hints of our inherited restraints, as they tried to implement the goals which evolved. The architect would be the first to realize the implications of the existence of the Dorm Authority, although the first realization of the inherited restraints did not hit us until after the first students were admitted. The librarian would begin to recount budget difficulties she encountered in trying to keep the library open all night, as the student planners requested. The Personnel Officer began revealing the restraints inherent in

functioning as a Civil Service institution when we tried to aggressively employ non-whites at the urging of the planning staff.

Since those "how-to-do" questions came naturally after the "what-to-do" questions, it was not until late in the planning process that the limits on our freedom to be innovative became apparent. By then, we were well along in that segment of planning responsible for raising expectation levels.

(a) faculty interviewing and hiring

(b) student interviewing and admissions

THE PRESIDENT

Harris Wofford was the College President during the gestation period. He is a liberal (in the sense that he believes that reform can come from within an institution), a pragmatist, and a

product of the University of Chicago during its "golden era". He was active in the civil rights movement during 1960-68. He is a lawyer. He is a politician by instinct and training. He believes sincerely in the dialectic, the extended conversation and mutual education of the conversationalist. He is, above all, the chief administrative officer of the college, and was legally responsible for making decisions.

President Wofford seeks to define his job as that of being the interface between various groups connected with the college. His belief in the dialectic made him sincere in his attempts to understand the positions held by others. It also made no decision final if new information was presented. Because of his background, he had a perspective on education somewhat broader than traditional educators. This often placed him in crossfire between traditional academicians and such groups as the "touchy-feelies" (students oriented to sensory education) or those desiring activist education.

Because he was at the University of Chicago during the time when President Hutchins was reforming it, President Wofford felt that significantly different kinds and qualities of education could come through curricular innovation alone ——————→ ——→ Because of his experience with the Peace Corps, he had a deep commitment to the learning potential inherent in different environments.

President Wofford did not come to the position of college president without a vision. He had, from his earliest moments in that position, a stated goal: A college of colleges, a

a federation of constrasting constituent colleges, with the first program a combination of great books with an action field program. Students often did not give full recognition to this vision's existence, and the President on several occasions reminded them of its existence.

Due to several experiences in his life, notably law training and political involvement, President Wofford was canny in his attempts to create an "Open Space" within which he and his college could move, while appearing to have become definitive to casual observers. For example, to satisfy Albany's request for a catalogue, an impressive document was produced, laden with definitive items, names of books, credit granting scheme, designs for course offerings, etc. However, course offerings, if carefully examined, lead one to be unclear as to what exactly will be done. The device usually used was to describe such an amount of work that it would be impossible to do it, thus giving Albany its description, and furnishing the faculty and students with the freedom to select from a huge area of inquiry that which suits them. An illustration:

> Philosophy, Logical Analysis, and Understanding
>
> By careful analysis of the logic of various kinds of reformist discourse, this workshop will help the student to develop his ability to enter into and experience the magic of visions of the world which are not his own and to develop a scruple against being satisfied with his understanding of opposing visions when his understanding falls short of experiencing the magic. This is seen, not only as a safeguard against intolerance, but as a necessary condition of self-examination. The training in logic will be accomplished primarily through supervised practice in analyzing and entering into the thoughts of various revolutionaries from Marx to Malxolm X.
>
> (p.26 first catalogue)

Preserving open space while appearing to close it requires substantial political skill. It was useful, indeed required, if any freedom of decision was going to rest with students and faculty, given the hereditary restrictions and Albany's requirements, However, this type of course description causes trouble; the various people reading it tend to read into it their desires. The school, through the image this document and other college-issued publications created, becomes like the proverbial elephant being inspected by five blind men: as they fondled the elephant, each blind man pronounced the beast alternately hairy, snakelike, smelly, rough or smooth. It is important to understand that the catalogue was required by Albany. President Wofford was using his skills to keep the definitions involved both specific enough to satisfy Albany, and broad enough not to lock students and faculty into pre-planned coursework.

Nor was this kind of image creation limited to the catalogue. President Wofford used his skills extensively during planning seminars, relations with the public, and in dialogue with faculty and students.

During the gestation period, some crucial events occurred which significantly affected the nature of the beast yet unborn. Four are crucial to the understanding of the causes of the sit-in. They are in order of occurrence:

(a) student planners redefined "full partnership";

(b) the catalogue was printed;

(c) faculty was hired;

(d) students were admitted.

Each of these events contributed, by their style and content, to the raising of unrealistically high levels of expectations among the student body.

STUDENT PLANNERS

According to the mandate, the new college was intended to "...admit students to Full Partnership in the academic world and grant them the right to determine, in large measure, their own areas of study and research." On study, this has to be a mandate to individual students. Since much of the current tension in the educational world is the result of failure to individualize education for students, this seems appropriate. Students are not a monolithic block, and should not have people planning their study areas for them as if they were.

However, during the planning process, student planners tended to obscure the original definition and call for full and equal votes on issues, ——————————→ ——————————→ ——————→ thus implying a political recognition of students as a corporate unit. This definition, while hard fought for, was achieved at the cost of the original definition. The individual student lost in great measure the power of determining his own area of study as the mandate intended.

What began to occur was the phenomenon of one group of students (the planners) injecting their own bias into the study format. Instead of having administrators deciding on which courses students should have to take, other students did it.

It is obvious that this was not the intended result. When a wave of resentment surfaced, those complaining were told (rightly) that students had contributed to the planning.

This reply failed to make the resentful ones less anguished, but did somehow turn their resentment toward other students or "the planners" who had led them astray. In a certain sense, this corruption of the role of student planners was inevitable. If course work must be pre-planned due to Albany's requirements, then someone must plan it. It is perhaps better to include students in that planning group than to leave them out. However, to call this "...full partnership in the academic world, and grant them the right, in large measure, to determine their own areas of inquiry...", is a peculiar perception of reality.

One of the justifications presented to Albany for the use of student planners was the need to create a sense of student participation in college building which would then be transmitted to later classes, causing less of a feeling of alienation. This logic was again used to justify an early opening.

> "An earlier, smaller opening also seems essential in order to carry out the master plans mandate 'to admit students to full partnership in the academic world.' In the last six months we have made an important beginning in the development of such a partnership. The attached set of press comments show the widespread favorable attention to this approach. But creating such a new relationship based on mutual respect and participation is going to be difficult. It would be almost impossible for students to feel or be partners if, when they arrive, the plans are all made, the buildings built, the pattern laid down. Confronting 1,000 students with a largely established college could only promote an alienation compounded by the rhetoric of partnership."
>
> excerpt pp. 6-7 memo to Chancellor Gould
> July 1967
> from President Wofford

It appears obvious to me, in retrospect, that this is exactly what occured, not in the early admission of students, but in the use of students as planners, mis-named partners.

The incoming students were met by a preplanning smorgasbord of relatively developed course offerings, surrounded by a variety of plans already made. The presence of this prior decision-making precipitated just the sort of "...alienation compounded by rhetoric" that President Wofford feared.

THE CATALOGUE

When the catalogue was printed and released, the process of codifying confusion was begun in earnest. Central to this confusion was a unique lexicon:

Old Westbury will be "Experimental"

Old Westbury will have "Full Partnership"

Old Westbury will "Pay Heed to the Individual Student"

Old Westbury will be "Unrestricted"

Old Westbury will be "Innovative and Creative"

Old Westbury will "Attempt to End the Lock Step March"

Old Westbury will grant "Freedom".

It is hard to overestimate the role that these concepts played in the gestation of Old Westbury. For example, consider the following paragraph from the first catalogue.

> "State University Chancellor Samuel B. Gould has asked this college 'to review all the conventional ingredients such as admissions policies, grades, course systems and academic divisions, and break what ever barriers may stand in the way.' This is part of the effort to make the State University of New York 'the most ambitious laboratory in the world for innovation in higher education'."

> "In creating this new college the State University sees the restlessness, curiosity and questioning of youth not as a spectre, but an opportunity. The turbulent, critical mood of today's students is a great occasion for their concern for relevance, their search for individual identity and their questioning of everything can lead to better teaching, more relevant courses, more disciplined and serious study, deeper personal understanding and greater involvement with public problems. Old Westbury is being designed to test the possibilities for such a renewal of liberal education and of the liberal arts college in the center of the university."
>
> pp. 5-6
> 1st catalogue

Taken in the context of the mandate, the letter from Chancellor Gould, and the press coverage, a school such as Old Westbury seems to have a reasonable chance to innovate. The catalogue neither overstates the spirit of the mandate nor attempts to falsely create high expectations.

The fact is, however, that by stating the then perceived range of possibilities, the catalogue was instrumental in causing confusion. Although the catalogue was approved by Albany, the restrictions on the mandate's success, which deny any substantive innovations, still existed. The high expectation level created among the incoming students was simply not satisfiable.

FACULTY SELECTION

The faculty selection was done using a series of interviews followed by a seminar for the planning staff, led by the candidate. This process was time consuming for the staff. Because it was, the attendance at such seminars tended to exclude people with a developing grasp of the limits of our freedom (the "how-to-do people). By the same token, it tended to include those

planners concerned with educational styles--the students, the faculty, and members of the administration not actively involved in relating to Albany or the Council. In other words, there was a tendency for those people most determined to be innovative, and least aware of the limits of the chances to be innovative, to select faculty.

While this was at best only a trend, I feel it is significant. Those who were "exciting, innovative, creative, etc." were in turn excited by their audience, which did not have a true grasp of the fact that Old Westbury had never been granted any dispensation from traditional restraints. This process gained momentum when faculty candidates began sending students of theirs to be interviewed. The student would be interviewed, and in the cybernetic recitation of what occurred, a national reputation of sorts began to evolve. This was in no small way affected by the style of the various interviews, which were different in form from schools across the country. How many schools, for example, have students interview faculty? It was intrinsically exciting, and the media began to carry a message. The freedom to conduct business in such a fashion was limited to a few small areas, and was really not a maintainable freedom once volume of activity reached beyond a certain point. Nevertheless, the image was there, and it was the subject of discussion in such publications as the Wall Street Journal, Time Magazine, and the Washington Post.

All this, of course, bore fruit in the admissions process.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The admissions process was perhaps the realization of the principle of environment creation through image manipulation. It was personal, usually skillful, possessed a unique style, and was totally different from most admissions experiences potential students underwent elsewhere.

The image that attracted students had its roots in the mandate, as projected in the catalogue and media, accepted by faculty contacts, and seasoned by bermudas and bearded interviewers. The image was not solely the product of Old Westbury, for elements of it had the encouragement of various notables in Albany in their public statements, disseminated with the Council's assistance.

People interested in traditional education were usually not attracted. People looking for exciting education were. Business major types usually did not seek interviews; New Left recruits did. None of this was planned; there was no conspiracy against straight people who combed their hair and went to church. The fact is, however, that those applying as the result of the public image were not a typical cross section of American college applicants. On the whole, they were brighter, less conformist, more socially conscious, and more idealistic than the average.

This flood of talent was handled by the same general segment of the planning staff that wrote the catalogue and interviewed most of the faculty. Due to the pressure of work loads, the bulk of the interviewing was done by:

(a) those staff members wishing to satisfy students non-academic needs

(b) the student planners.

The other groups, such as the line administration (with the important exception of the business manager) were too busy in their duties to take the required two to four hours a day to interview. The administration interviewed occasionally (some members, in fact, did a considerable amount of interviewing) and the faculty, which still consisted only of one full-time philosopher and several part-time people, made their inputs. However, taken on balance, the bulk of the interviewing was done by people who were most prepared to pursue the mandated opportunities to the fullest, who were just beginning to perceive the restraints of the venture.

This process of interviewing and raising expectation levels was a cumulative one. Those interviewed went back to their high schools bearing their perceptions of Old Westbury, and generated more applicants for the school. Naturally, the second wave of applicants had stronger expectations than did the first because the media and personal friend contact reenforced their imagery.

After each interview, the interviewer wrote up his perceptions of the candidate and evaluated the students suitability. A kind of consensual "Old Westbury type" evolved after this process had functioned for a while. What tended to happen is that those selected reflected the bias of the interviewers.

Thus, from a pool of almost 1,000 applicants, most of whom were eager for educational innovation, the most liberal, most exciting, creative, brightest group was selected.

This group of people reflected, and in fact aided in the further escalation of expectation levels of the planning staff. Faced with such an impressive group by almost all standards,

phrases like "students' responsibility", and "ending the lock step" took on new excitement, for if any group could do it, this one could.

None of this activity was conspiratorial, none of it was out of line with the commonly held public rhetoric, and none of it was done with deceit in mind. People involved in the process sincerely, and with considerable talent, selected the best candidates they could find to fulfill the public expectations. That those expectations were unsatisfiable was not yet perceived.

THE CREATED ENVIRONMENT

Trying to describe just how powerful the experimental ethos was during the first month of classes is difficult. The pervasive set of expectations created several discussions or events which may portray just how determined to be experimental the students were.

One of the first such events occurred when the entire faculty arrived one month prior to the official opening. They were content to become settled and learn about the other faculty for the first three weeks. Suddenly, one week before the bulk of the students arrived, they began to develop a firm curriculum. Book lists were developed, and teaching schedules set up. Not all the faculty participated in this, but those disdaining the structuring of academic areas of inquiry, without the bulk of students participating, were swept aside. Areas of each course were left undeveloped, held in abeyance so that students could make their imputs upon arrival, as a recognition to this faculty objection. Instead of guaranteeing incoming students the freedom to determine their own areas of inquiry, as the mandate called for, the areas were blocked out for them. Students could make the pursuit of these areas as painless as possible. What occured was a subtle channeling.

Poll takers have long noted that giving a respondent a prepared list of alternatives tends to limit answers to that list, whereas if no list of alternatives is provided, the answers cover a wide range. So it was with the offering of courses. Instead of students developing their own areas of interest, (an

intrinsically educational process), they were told to select from among the areas of interest of the faculty.

Since the selection process for both faculty and students was similar, large areas of the proposed curriculum was mutually agreeable. It was this fact that avoided a larger confrontation between faculty and students than occurred. As it was, the determined-to-be experimental students proposed a complete halt on course planning until all students were on campus, and a scrapping of previously made plans. Letters and phone calls went out from students who arrived on campus early to those still at home, saying in substance, "come quick, they are taking our freedom away." A rousing debate about the role of pre-planning ensued, which was uneasily resolved under pressure of time in favor of a system whereby students would take those course offerings they found attractive and create alternatives if they wanted. Undealt with was the subtle channeling which occurred or the lost learning opportunity involved in conceptualizing educational goals.

Another example of the high expectation levels in the student and faculty groups was a community meeting on the subject of co-educational toilets. Some students who had had prior experience in communal living felt that to provide co-ed toilets arrangement would be a good learning experiment for those students trying to question American values. The request was made in such a fashion that students not desiring such arrangements would not be forced to face them. A long meeting of the entire community resulted, during which time students passionately argued for freedom of choice in deciding which area of their lives they were

attempting to challenge. The opposition voices fears of public opinion, Albany pressure, Council reaction, etc. President Wofford, consistent with his educational philosophy, encouraged the debate as part of the facing of realities in decision-making on the part of the student body.

The significant thing about this debate was that it occured at all. It demonstrates just how fully the notions of questioning, challenging the old order, experimentation, etc., had taken hold. Can you imagine the sister school's (Stony Brook) university student body considering for a minute the possibility of such an arrangement? We not only considered it, we argued it for three hours! The result, which was a recognition on the part of the students the President Wofford would not be able to defend the college publically, actually bore out his idea of the dialectic. Nonethe less, the fact remains that students actually came prepared to question fundamentally such values as privacy in toilet functions.

The idea of co-ed dormitories, considered a radical notion by many observers, was so readily acceptable to most students that they were astonished to find out it was not taken for granted. In fact, when the existence of such an arrangement was subject to question by the Council, it was difficult to raise any interest in dealing with the Council because it was so accepted as a style of living by the students. It was so consistent with their expectation level they could not take seriously the fact that it was being questioned!

In a more traditional academic vein, a ruckus developed when students who did conceptualize areas of interest in which they

hoped to study individually were told that this would have to be approved by a committee of students and faculty This group was called the "option X" committee When some of the proposals were rejected as not being worthy of college credit, a wave of outrage swept through the student body Here, in the heart of academic experimentation, proposals for areas of study were being measured against an existing yardstick of traditional acceptability' Meetings were called, petitions supporting this or that worthy candidate circulated The descriptive value of citing this is that students honestly believed that new areas and approaches to inquiry would be acceptable

The above illustrations are but a few examples of how high the expectation level of the student body was As the year unfolded, the restraints on Old Westbury grew more and more obvious People were blamed for the lack of this freedom or that innovation. Bitterness grew as honest and well-intentioned efforts at doing innovative things were thwarted by one or another of our inherited, but previously unperceived, restraints The people who were often bearers of bad news were blamed for originating that news, instead of transmitting it One was often reminded of the scene from King Henry the Eighth's court when the messenger most out of favor was chosen to deliver unpleasant news, because of the punishment he would receive Planners were accused of having made the wrong decision Administrators were called stuffy bureaucrats The frustration level grew, as loose blame placing began to create scapegoats. Granted, there were some bad decisions Some decisions may have been bureaucratic

Yet, the number of such events in no way explained the viciousness of the condemnations hurled at the scapegoats

As the year continued, our lack of true freedom to innovate continued to raise tensions. Various pressure groups from outside the school began to make themselves felt. This in turn began to make the students more defensive, and created a strong sense of paranoia among the student body. If an outsider were to go to any "normal" college and find the dorms co-ed, the parking lots open to both faculty and students, no grading evident, and students working hard in various quasi-administrative functions dealing with admissions and teaching, the observer would expect to find relatively happy students. At Old Westbury one found tense individuals with bloodshot eyes from sleepless nights, heard bitter condemnations of some members of the faculty and administration, and found a large amount of personal self doubt as to the part one played in the success/failure of the school. The perceived failure can be seen only in the context of the high expectations students brought with them.

Students themselves contrubuted to the tense atmosphere, because most of them had never really faced the conflict in themselves between getting a degree (a union card) and getting an "education". When they did posit forms of educational alternatives, the alternatives often couldn't have "legitimately" been described as college education--the alternatives were exciting, unusual, innovative--but seldom could they be considered as "college" education. Granted the literal translation of the mandate, this may not be surprising. Even as the lack of freedom

became more obvious, students suggested the kind of course work often found in "free universities", whose inhabitants had decided on forgetting the pursuit of the degree in favor gaining an "education".

In so far as the conflict between getting a "license" vs getting an "education" was concerned, most students thought that somehow they could get both at Old Westbury. They continued trying to reconcile the two goals, attempting to make licensing painless for themselves and others, rather than shifting goals completely, and leaving the traditional system of higher education in favor of other forms.

The faculty contributed to the growing sense of disillusionment by reverting to behavior found in traditional colleges. They were products of 20-25 years in the academic world, and certain traits were ingrained. They soon reasserted themselves.

Primary among these traits was the need to lecture. The planners had rejected the lecture as the basic educational format based on a considerable body of knowledge on learning theory. They had adopted small classrooms, circular seating arrangements, and the descriptive word "seminar" to describe what they hoped would be a process of student educating student, guided gently by the teacher as a resource. This called for skill as a discussion leader which really involves submerging the leader into the role of prompter and leading question asker, rather than dispenser of wisdom. This ran contrary to the training and background of the faculty, and with few exceptions, lectures, although more intimate than those that occurred at most other colleges, soon reasserted

themeselves as the basic educational mode. This caused considerable tension among the student body. They saw circular seating arrangements altered to suit a dominant speaker, and knew they were subtly losing ground.

The sense of uneasiness grew, and certainly was not limited to the student body. The faculty was unhappy and frustrated, and was having just as much difficulty understanding why as the students. Much of the unease was due to the lack of feedback the faculty was receiving. The traditional guideposts and reference points were removed to a great extent. By not having tests, and mid-term grades, this left the majority of the faculty without a sense of progress. Many students (contrary to public opinion) read and studied a great deal during the year. Because the faculty did not have evaluation process other than personal feedback, they had no way of evaluating just how much work the students actually did. Among the faculty this showed up in comments like, "I feel like I don't know if I am reaching my students", or "I never felt so unsure of the progress of any class".

Both faculty and students were active in recruiting new students and faculty for the next academic year. This involved them in dealing with Albany, during which more of the contradictory nature of our existence surfaced. These students and faculty began to invoke some of the very restraints they objected to. They discovered the Old Westbury needed its inheritance to survive as an "experimental" college. On several occasions, student and faculty groups had to fight for needed money by citing other institutions within the state system. They had to

invoke the system of ratios in order to get what was our minimum due.

The contradiction in such behavior was not lost on these individuals. As it seemed an insoluble dilemma, the frustration generated by the perception remained.

At approximately this point, several events exacerbated the situation. The dormitory, source of most of the initial student inspired attempts to innovate, came under attack from a group of non-college people enraged by what they described as filth, obscenities, pictures drawn on walls, and general lack of consideration for the public property. This was compounded by a visit (unannounced) to the dorm by the architects of the building, who submitted a report to Albany of their findings, at the invitation of some member of the central administration. This report was followed by an estimate of eight thousand dollars to have the entire building repaired and repainted, which was submitted by a local painter The President, Dean of Students, and SPS staff held hurried consultations. They were advised by Albany to explain the situation.

The facts (later quietly acknowledged) were that only three obscenities were found on the walls of the dorms, which had not been repainted in one year, during which three different groups of people lived in the building Some student art work was painted directly on the walls, but the students had been explicitly told that the dorm was their home, and that they were encouraged to change it to suit them. Some rooms were covered with quotes, written directly on the walls with magic markers, but again, such things were permitted by administrators not under-

standing the limits on the type of paints, colors, etc., that could go on State walls (yes, even that is covered in our inheritance.)

During the resultant fervor, students often saw administrators accompanied by tie-clad briefcase toters of unknown orgin, peering into rooms or examining student paintings with disgust. The obscenities were later painted out by our own maintenance staff, and rules on the appropriate types of paint for redecorating dorm rooms were issued. Students got genuinely insulted.

This incident was closely followed by the publication of a student magazine, which featured psychedelic art, nudes, and cryptic poetry. Essays by McLuhan were reprinted, as well as comments on the administration of Old Westbury. Each issue grew progressively more daring, as if to probe the limits of experimentation. When these limits were reached, new examples of what was not permissible had been generated. The limits were, in fact, quite broad--but to the students, they were seen as a challenge to their freedoms of speech and publicity. The crisis point occurred when members of the administration entered the college mail room and seized about-to-be mailed copies of the publication which they considered pornographic. This action focused the responsibility for the lack of freedom onto the President.

Prior to this, the President had been seeking to locate heads for the consituent colleges necessary for the formation of the Federal model of learning he had envisioned earlier--despite eighteen months of planning, discussion, and student inputs, he remained convinced that this model for experimentation

was the best. During the final stages of this decision, students began to become more vociferous in their demands for power in the decision-making of the college. This question of power, which had really been with the college from the beginning, was inexplicably bound up in the use and misuse of the concept of full partnership and planning discussed earlier. A larger number of students began to try and figure out how to gain control of the decision-making process to shape the college in keeping with their vision. This process really was almost a linear reaction to the disillusionment setting in--as long as students felt content with the experiment's form and content, only a few wanted to insure student power. In fact, the apolitical nature of many of the students frustrated this political minority in the early part of the school year. As disenchantment set in, larger and larger numbers of students and faculty began to seek power.

It is my opinion that, for most of the people involved, this pursuit of power was the pursuit of a means, rather than an end. Only a few of the group involved in the sit-in are really personally power oriented. In fact, during the playing of Simsoc (a game studying governance developed by the Rand Corp., and used by the social science faculty to demonstrate the frailty of Governance) many Old Westbury students refused to fight for the power to survive. The game closed with many people on the brink of "starving to death". In real life, however, as the students saw more and more of the chance for innovation and creativity slipping away they organized to pursue the power to gain their ends. a truly experimental college, questioning all the traditional

elements of education As students became more power conscious, they also became more likely to become outraged if power they had thought was theirs was denied Perhaps the best example of this came when the President announced that he reserved the right to select the Provosts for the constituent colleges after consultation with the faculty

All along, new faculty had been interviewed by the faculty selection committee composed of students and faculty Members of the group had invested incredible hours into the selection of faculty members they thought would lend themselves best to the creation of an experimental college Similarly, this group interviewed librarians and other line staff that could conceivably effect the shape of things to come Since the provosts were to teach, the members of this committee felt they should select them or at very least, interview a field of candidates and recommend several When the President declared that provosts were not to be selected in this fashion, the students felt that one of their two areas of influence (admissions and faculty selection) were being removed All hell broke loose

The President was honestly surprised, for he felt that students would be glad to see him surrender some of his power to new provosts However the students saw no gain in power for themselves in the appointment of provosts, especially if they had no voice in the selection of such people Instead they saw the source of power growing more diffuse, harder to deal with, and certainly representative of the same kind of thinking (they thought) which had cost them their freedom lost to date By now they had a better idea of what shape the school was taking

With each day it looked less and less experimental

The following document, quoted in full, was written by one of the more power-conscious students. Often throughout the year students argued with or ignored her writings. On this occasion, however, she found a willing audience. This document contains many comments on issues which surfaced during the sit-in. It caused considerable discussion.

"AN OPEN LETTER TO HARRIS WOFFORD:

RE: 'Draft for Consideration at Next Faculty Meeting'

Well, we finally made it. It was a long semester -- and for brief moments I almost doubted we'd make it -- but we did: now we're just like every other American college. We've been allowed to play the game under the aegis of 'full partnership' and 'experimental' college -- but only to test our political maturity. After a week's fiasco of bargaining, begging, and blasphemy you rendered the struggle meaningless with political maneuvering that only succeeded in demonstrating to you our political naivete and general unwillingness to risk a San Francisco State demolition here. You played the role of liberal administrator well and managed where others failed to pull off quite a good show. With triumph in your back pocket you decided it was no longer necessary to play the game, that we wouldn't react any more effectively to open abuse then we did to veiled insult. And so you published what can only be considered a masterpiece in the annals of college administration documents.

I had been deluded into believing that the source of our problem here was an aura of unreality about relationships: in more (?) traditional universities the opposition is evident and serves as a rallying point; here, the opposition is ambiguous and often friendly, intimately known by us all. Perhaps it is we who possess the reality: overtly 'working with' Harris and the boys while covertly getting fucked over. (As for the obscenity concern of Albany, it's dirty old men like those in Albany who ignore the development of colloquialisms in language in their attempts to preserve the more lewd etymologies.)

Earlier in the semester I put my thoughts to paper and circulated them among some friends. I decided against general distribution because they seemed a bit premature -- the eternal optimist. Looking over that article today, I find it not only all true but ... not true enough. Some excerpts:

> The truth about Old Westbury is that it is not essentially different from most other American colleges and universities -- though it must be admitted that some of the trimmings are almost unique. Members of the 'community' still operate in the same old dichotomies of students against faculty; students are still more involved in their 'extra-curricular' activities (though Old Westbury has managed to institutionalize some of these) than in the classical 'pursuit of learning'; faculty are still paranoic about the power of the administration; and the administration is still trying to coax the students and faculty to ambivalence with sugar-coated promises of partnership in policy-making without any concrete efforts to radically alter the traditional modes of decision-making. And everybody is clouding the real question of just what is an experimental college (emphasis on experiment) with all this bullshit about community and partnership and social regulations and the threat of the OUTSIDERS.
>
> . . . What is it we are doing here? Learning to learn in the Greek mode and building a liberal arts college in the medieval tradition. Appelations of 'experimental' and 'innovative' are begging the question because we are relying on all the old models -- there is little here that is not a modified, watered-down version of somebody else's ideas, theories, methods; little that is absolutely, creatively unique.

Frank Miata has a phrase that he throws at us: paranoia is true perception. We should have listened. We grovelled over the crumbs while you ate the cake.

Your proposal is, if not counter-revolutionary, at the very least unimaginative and conventional. The students here have only asked all along for an honest commitment to finding creative alternatives to the present structures of higher education; a commitment to experimentation. You have consistently refused that commitment, using Albany, the College Council, and the community reaction as your scapegoats. All of us have just as consistently accepted those scapegoats and backed off.

In every instance we have allowed you to submerge the real issue in a bog of minor, often absurd issues (e.g., stopping the summer planning until the 'real students' arrived, co-ed dormitories -- which dissolved into a discussion of co-ed bathrooms; faculty appointments, the role of the faculty, altering radically this year's curriculum, the 50% racial balance). This obfuscation was accepted without question by us -- even in our most heated battles with you over any one of these issues. However, we can no longer ignore the fundamental issue: who shall have the power to make decisions on this campus -- and we have your memo to thank for that.

As I said at the community meeting two weeks ago, we must stop looking for precedents for every damn thing we do and be an experimental college (which is particularly relevant in this case since your proposal amounts to a replay of Santa Cruz on the East Coast with the necessary alterations to mollify the students. It might be interesting to note that you found it necessary to improve on the Santa Cruz model for the students but did not find it likewise necessary for the faculty -- perhaps this indicates your real view of the influence of this faculty? It should be apparent to everyone since the advent of your proposal (which, by the way, I use loosely since I am well aware by this time that you never make proposals, Harris, no matter how incomplete they may be) that we can never hope to approach anything remotely experimental until we abandon our present Machiavellian power structure.

My reason for writing you now is a somewhat cynical hope that this letter will help move some people out of their current state of immobility. As a secondary achievement, I would accept the re-channelling of attentions in the directions I have indicated. But, if this letter serves no other purpose than to foster paranoia, it will have served a useful end."

Several things occurred during the ensuing months which functioned to avoid immediate trouble, but which almost certainly contributed to it ultimately. The student body was off in their field work, spread out as far away as Mexico, and deeply involved in the "real " world's problems. This prevented sufficient numbers of people from gathering to discuss the rapidly crystallizing formulas for Old Westbury education. Across the nation, students everywhere were demanding recognition and being granted a voice in the running of their universities. Curriculums were being radically revamped. Guns were being flashed, and civil disobedience in the Ghandian sense was being rendered obsolete.

On the Old Westbury campus, decisions were being made on a variety of subjects, from the format of the upcoming ten day evaluation period to a decision not to rehire a faculty member seen by many students as truly innovative. All the elements were present for the eruption of mass rage directed toward some focus point:

(a) anger was there at perceived betrayal of ideals

(b) the real enemy was unseen, for the inherited restraints were not common knowledge

(c) the rhetoric continued to go out in the admission process

(d) the enragés were dispersed, nursing their anger in small groups

(e) the President was continuing to bring bad news back to campus.

The sit-in was inevitable.

THE SIT-IN

On May 19th, the students who had been away on field work rejoined those who had stayed on campus. The purpose was a planned ten day review of the year, commencing with a "state of the college" speech given by the President. He recalled the events of the year, and cited those decisions which had been arrived at. This summary crystallized much of the dismay which had been building, as those students who had been away were presented with confirmation of their feeling that the form of the college was being defined in non-experimental ways, despite the rhetoric used.

About two-thirds of the way through the meeting, a group of students stood up, and declared the report to be "obscene". They said it was the statement of a non-participative, non-experimental, non-full partnership institution, which had become something other than what many people who allegedly participated in the planning envisioned. They laid the blame squarely on the President in no uncertain terms, and walked out.

Following this, various other students and faculty spoke powerfully and bluntly about their unhappiness and their frustration. They tried to express their sense of how the current form had come to exist, how hard they had tried to contribute to the forming of an experimental school, and what had gone wrong. Most of the blame was laid on the President. He sat through this with a pained, slowly vanishing smile which ended up looking like he had gas. Various students left, some faculty went home, and the meeting sputtered on in an attempt to alternately analyze, explain, and describe the failure to be different

in substantive ways from "all the others". The meeting never really ended. It just got soggy, and tiredly splintered off into tension laden knots of ex-full partners.

The next day a set of demands were presented to the President, followed closely by a second set. On the 21st, meetings were held between the President and the two groups. The meetings ended when the President refused to grant the students the authority to name the provosts, or dissolve the already established constituent colleges. Later, the two groups of students entered the administration buildings and began the sit-in, which lasted until the 27th. Endless hours of discussion followed, culminating in a decision to appoint a committee to function over the summer drafting a constitution outlining the governance process.

During the sit-in many other events occurred, including the entering of the President's files, the formation of a third student group, and many heated debates. For the purposes of this paper they are practically irrelevant.

The important point to examine is the intent of the totalled demands. The demands totaled six--four from the "non-white caucus" and two additional from the "May 19th Committee".

(a) the right to select a provost for the urban studies school

(b) that the President approve and publicize their choice by May 29th

(c) that a dismissed faculty member that student liked be rehired

(d) that student approved procedures for the hiring of faculty and provosts be produced by May 29th

(e) the already established constituent colleges be dissolved

(f) that the controversial appointment of the two provosts be rescinded.

The intent of this collection of demands is well described by President Wofford in his report to the Chancellor and the Council. I will quote excerpts of the report, trying not to distort their intended meaning by taking them from context.

> "In contrast (to neighboring colleges) the students at Planting Fields, as the press accurately reported, were not only non-violent and willing to talk, most of them were obviously not acting out of a hostility to the college but OUT OF A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COLLEGE. They wanted full partnership, as they understood the idea in their College." (p. 2 caps are my own)

> "Let me add that the students who came to Old Westbury were from the start unusually idealistic and sensitive, if not already inclined toward radical solutions. The idea of students as 'full partners' attracted such students who just wanted to go to college to get a particular degree or prepare for a career. The sit-in by about 1/3 of the students and the day and night negotiations by another third was EVIDENCE THAT THE IDEA OF JOINT RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIP WAS TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY. This was something other than mere alienation: it has an important positive thrust." (p.10 caps are mine)

When the students left the administration buildings, they issued a statement which indicated that they still had this sense of responsibility.

> "We leave not out of fear, nor despair, but in a position of strength...we are willing to negotiate--and eager to see if this institution can BEGIN TO FULFILL IT'S MANDATE AS AN EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE..." (caps are my own)

The chairman of the Council, in his analysis of the roots of the
of the sit-in prepared for the Council, also recognized the underlying motivation:

> "Another (positive aspect of the college) is the student body itself. Most of its members are highly intelligent, with a DEEP COMMITMENT TO THE EXPERIMENT OF WHICH THEY ARE A PART.

> IN FACT, IT IS THIS COMMITMENT (politically deflected as it was) THAT WAS PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAY SIT-IN. . . (p.6 caps are mine)

As demonstrated during the first meeting of the intended ten day review, the students were not alone in their sense of dreams betrayed. Again, to quote President Wofford,

> "To make matters worse, on such issues, (student domination of the decision making roles in the college), about a third of the faculty could be expected to support the students. During the sit-in seven faculty (including one who had already resigned in June, one who had just arrived, and the film director whose non-appointment had been one of the issues leading up to the sit-in) SIGNED A STATEMENT SUPPORTING 'THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE AND ACTIONS OF THE NON-WHITE CAUCUS AND THE MAY 19th COMMITTEE'". (p.14 caps are mine)

(Let me editorially comment here that these seven represented a good deal more than one third of the faculty in the sense that word is commonly used. They were one third of the legal faculty, which consisted of the President, Vice-President, Dean of Students, librarian, and other non-teaching positions. In fact, if the number of part-time faculty not present on campus during the sit-in is included along with those non-teaching members of the faculty defined as legal faculty, and subtracted from the total twenty one used to arrive at one third, a figure close to a majority of the teaching faculty is arrived at. At any rate, disillusionment was not limited to students.)

Reviewing several papers by the students which state their goals, issued at this time, we again find the strong sense of commitment for educational reform:

> "The power we want to achieve is to free students from institutionalized educational control that stifles learning. We do not want to turn the tables around and use our power to suppress others."

> "Many of us feel that a true experiment cannot occur here, that the appointed authorities will not relinquish their vested interests, will not be truly willing to surrender their dominance over our lives. In spite of this, we are surrendering the administration buildings as a gesture of hope, and a form of trust."

It was on this last note that the sit-in ended. The students left the buildings and entered into a tense, exhaustive search for a manner of governance which would allow what they perceived as the quest for innovation to start afresh. Many students worked hard over the summer drafting the constitution, and developing curricula.

After the sit-in, both Harris Wofford (the President), and Maitland Edey (the President of the Council) attempted to explain to their various constituencies exactly what had occurred. In some ways their reports are perceptive and helpful However, in careful reading of their reports, one is left with the sense that the real root problem was still not recognized, and hence remained unresolved, in spite of the pending constitution. Maitland Edey says:

> "On the College itself What went wrong? Plenty. To begin with, I think that Wofford, in his initial enthusiasm for student participation in starting the College, and in his belief that students should play a role in all aspects of College activity, made a mistake in hitting this idea too hard too early The most politically-minded of the students took this as an indication that they might indeed get to run the College: "You keep talking about student power, Harris; do you mean it, or is this just another Establishment cop-out?" He fenced with this issue, meanwhile trying to resolve it by getting the students and faculty to develop proposals for a College Constitution. When they failed to do this, I believe that he made a second mistake in not promptly establishing a Constitution himself in conjunction with the faculty, and then asking the students to consider it, recommend changes etc As it was, the question of where the power really lay remained unresolved until the matter of the 50% non-white admissions policy problem came up in the middle of the year Wofford vetoed this, revealing that the power lay with him There is a subtle but important point here Wofford, who as a keystone of his educational philosophy, believes in sharing of power was forced to assume all of it during the non-white admissions referendum by the absence of any document that spelled out how power would be shared Thus his failure to press harder for adoption of a Constitution prior to this crisis came back to haunt him "

President Wofford addressing this point says:

> "In retrospect I agree with Maitland Edey s judgement that I pushed the idea of student partnership too far too soon, with too few explicitly defined limitations The Pandora s box of student participation was opened before we came along (as shown in the phrase we found in the already adopted 1966 University Master Plan which promised that this new college would "admit students to full partnership in the academic world") While conceding our miscalculation

> in emphasizing so imprudently ambiguous a phrase, I also remember that, according to legend, at the bottom of Pandora's box, after all the furies had escaped to wreak their havoc, there was one last force which may have made it all worthwhile--Hope. There is indeed hope in the complex challenge of student participation, and no hope in simply trying to reestablish the old bureaucratic hierarchies."

Both President Wofford and Mr. Edey seem to feel that an error was made in attempting to live up to the mandate and other references to innovation and creativity made by Albany. The students, on the other hand, feel that the error was made in not going further in attempting to live up to the mandate.

The promulgation of the constitution itself thus misses dealing with the main soruces of frustration--which lies in the fact that very little real room for innovation existed, or currently exists in the New York State university system. It was for this opportunity to innovate that the sit-in occurred. The constitution may foster the myth that change is possible if only the votes can be garnered. This ignores the fact that the executives at Old Westbury actually create variations in policy, not the policy itself, which is created by other groups in other locations. The constitution attempts to regulate and clarify the respective constituencies' voices in decisions, when this campus has little or no jurisdiction over the areas which students were most inclined to challenge: co-ed dorms or jons, integration of staff, student body or construction crews, dormitory styles, course development outside of traditional areas or, even dropping physical education.

After any crisis, studies are done tc insure that the problem

won't reappear. Some studies, like that done after the Hindenberg Crash, cause substantive change in fundamental elements contributing to the tragedy. Other studies, such as the Kerner Commission Report, can identify causes or problems but cannot effect change. It is largely in the inexact social sciences that the latter kind of report exists. At Old Westbury, we have another problem; a study of the situation which identifies the wrong source of malaise, which, even if it were a correct identification, could not be dealt with.

It should by now be apparent that the sit-in was caused by the attempts on the part of the student body to realize the fruition of their high expectation levels, which are inherently unrealizable under the present restrictions Old Westbury is confronted with.

The next step in avoiding future such crises would seem to be the lowering of expectation levels. The process which created these (the catalogue, the faculty recruiting process, and the student admissions process) will undoubtedly be subject to scrutiny with an eye toward alteration.

Only a short sighted person, or system, would attempt such "reform". Of all the elements of Old Westbury, these are the three which came closest to approaching the change needed in the State system, and so clearly called for in the mandate. To attempt to alter them downward, constant with the nature of the rest of the college, would be a cruel joke. The reduction of these areas of innovation to the lowest common denominator would be akin to jailing our best poets because they make the rest of us look illiterate.

This trend is evident in the other area of creativity the school involved itself in. To refer to Mr. Edey's analysis:

> "Another problem was provided by the highly innovative first program--Urban Studies--which took many of the students away from the campus to live and work in the ghetto areas for extended periods during the year. This program, while enormously productive for those students who threw themselves into it, was overly ambitious as a starting program for a new college, and might better have been replaced by one that directed the attention of the students inward toward the College and to the central problem of adopting rules of governance. Also, when plans for other programs seemed to be progressing better than the Urban Studies Program, the non-white students became suspicious that the latter would turn out to be window dressing. It was this, plus Wofford's earlier veto of the 50% non-white referendum that precipitated the sit-in."

The future is not bright. The constitution notwithstanding, strong desire for fundamental change still exists. Students who did their first year abroad are returning from Mexico and Israel to face the current battered dream. Their expectation level was created last year. Compounding this, as President Wofford indicates, is the incoming group of students:

> In Fortune Magazine's January special issue on American Youth, a major opinion survey showed that college students can be divided into two categories: the so-called "practical minded" and the forerunners. About three-fifths were found to be practical, viewing college as a route to money and career, and holding relatively conventional values; most of these were in science, business, engineering and professional programs. About two-fifths, whom Fortune called "forerunners" said they wanted to change the system rather than make out well within it; most of them were in the social sciences, arts and humanities. The political views and social values of the "practical" college majority were found to be strikingly like those of the majority of young people who do not go to college at all, and in great variance with the liberal or radical views of the "forerunners". Of the estimated 2,300,000 "forerunners", nearly a fifth, or about 450,000 students, feel a sense of solidarity and identification with the New Left. As at Berkeley, Antioch and Reed, and now it seems Harvard, Yale and other Ivy League places, this persuasion is strong at Planting Fields. Of the 83 students on campus only a very few, if any,

> could be considered in the practical category. As one student representative has told the Council and Chancellor Gould, it would be difficult to find one who was not to the left of Hubert Humphrey. (In Fortune's survey, fifty percent of the "forerunners" opposed both Humphrey and Nixon; twenty percent supported Che Guevara.) Although our Director of Admissions has not sought any such unrepresentative student population, she assumes next year's 250 students will be more or less like the first 83, since the large pool of applications to this well-publicized experimental college of student partnership, concentrating initially in the social sciences and the humanities, is overwhelmingly "forerunners".
>
> (Report to the Council)

That this new group of students, added to our own Israeli contingent, and seasoned with the veterans of last year, will attempt to precipitate innovation and creativity remains as predictable as it should have been before the first confrontation. All the elements still exist, and so does that overwhelming list of inherited restraints described in this paper.

In a speech delivered at the Danforth Foundation workshop on liberal arts education, the President of Old Westbury recalled some of his thoughts upon taking on the job as President.

"Looking across the steeplechase field around which the clusters of the new college would be built, my first colleagues and I said to ourselves, 'There is no one to blow this but us.'"

This perception of the freedom and responsibility was, alas, utopian. The "experiment" was already "blown"--not by evil intent--not by staid reactionary types--but by the foundation garments already designed and existing in the state system. Their color and size was a mate of choice and evolution. But the restraints on the shape of the future were decided long before that steeplechase ever met Harris Wofford.

That Old Westbury should not have been permitted to be substantially different from other more"traditional" colleges is not surprising. Since our evolutionary roots first began to instruct their offspring in the ways of survival, through the development of the complex education system we now possess, the function of education has been to perretuate the culture. This idea was never allowed to be challenged.

A level of tragedy lies in the fact that Old Westbury is a modified representative of a collection of highly specialized institutions which have become obsolete for the majority of their subjects. This obsolescence lies in the fact that for students today the only constant is change. The certainty their elders found in death and taxes, God, Mother and Country, is simply non-existent, as these concepts shake under economic, scientific, and philosophic assault. The only thing certain is that tomorrow is not. As far as the students are concerned, the job of a college, particularly an "experimental" college, is to prepare them for a rapidly changing society.

In exponentially changing times the goal of any educational institution should be: to become unneeded. As "forerunners", many Old Westbury students see the current goal of most educational institutions as exactly the opposite. They see that in order to find the individualized meaning in life they are seeking, they know they have to become strong enough to exist without the security provided by an institution. This can be gained for the exceptional few by a momentary dunking, after which panic or innate ability caused them to hesitantly paddle about. For the rest, the ability

is gained through tenatative toe wetting, wading, and carefully supervised first lunges toward the security of the pool's edge.

The "forerunners" see that the kind of educational institutions this society requires would have students leaving it, not with disgust or revulsion, but with progressively deeper explorations into a place with no bottom. They see that the goal of education would have to be so redefined as to be unrecognizable. The degree given at the end of the process would have to be destroyed, and the process itself revalued. To create an organism which tried to make itself unnecessary, while instilling a love of the "deep water", is beyond the realm of cultural transmission.

So we see the primary level of tragedy in Old Westbury. The style toward achieving a given, clearly defined goal will perhaps differ substantially from sister institutions, but the goal will differ not a whit. The Middle States Accrediting agency will see to it.

For Old Westbury to be truly free to be "Innovative", "Creative", "End the Lock Step", ad nauseum, its true range of experimentation would have to extend to questioning the very reason for its existence--not questioning whether that existence dictated education (for that is implicit in its nature), but questioning and changing the nature of that learning. Such is the questioning which is true freedom. As the students discovered, it existed only "academically" at Old Westbury.

Note:

A following the years' events described within, the state university system of New York resigned President Wofford, terminated many of the original planning staff, and started the college all over again at a different location, under a new philosophy, but retaining the name.